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## MONITORING OF INTERNATIONAL PLANS AND PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

Measures taken by Member States to observe  
the International Day of Disabled PersonsReport of the Secretary-General

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\* E/CN.5/1995/1.

## INTRODUCTION

1. In conjunction with the observation of the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992), the General Assembly proclaimed, in resolution 47/3 of 14 October 1992, that 3 December be observed each year as the International Day of Disabled Persons. Proclamation of the International Day of Disabled Persons has three purposes:

(a) To commemorate the anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons on 3 December; 1/

(b) To ensure continued promotion of disability issues in the period beyond the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and to further the integration into society of persons with disabilities;

(c) To promote increased awareness among the population regarding gains to be derived by individuals and society from the integration of disabled persons in every aspect of social, economic and political life.

2. In resolution 48/97 of 20 December 1993, the General Assembly calls attention to the need to involve disabled persons and their organizations in the celebration of the International Day and to link each year's observation with important United Nations events.

3. In its resolution 1993/29 of 5 March 1993, the Commission on Human Rights appealed to Member States to highlight the observance of the International Day with a view to achieving full and equal enjoyment of human rights and participation in society by persons with disabilities.

4. In its resolution 48/97, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Commission for Social Development, at its thirty-fourth session, on measures taken by Member States to observe the International Day of Disabled Persons. The present report is submitted pursuant to that resolution.

## I. OBSERVATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS

### A. International level

5. In 1993, the Secretary-General issued a message placing the observance of the Day under the theme of a "Society for all". At United Nations Headquarters, an exhibition of disability-related technology was organized by the Centre for Computing and Disability, State University of New York at Albany, United States, in the visitor's lobby of the General Assembly building.

6. In 1994, the Secretary-General issued a message (see annex I) requesting the international community:

(a) To demonstrate firm political resolve, to approve adequate resources to transform into reality the commitments made in the World Programme of Action

and to aim at a society which accommodates human diversity and mobilizes the full potential of all its members;

(b) To understand and apply the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 2/ in every society;

(c) To continue integrating disability concerns into the wider efforts to construct a new development vision and a new framework for development cooperation.

1. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

7. UNESCO produced a pamphlet in English, French and Spanish to celebrate the International Day of Disabled Persons. It was widely disseminated to Member States, to interested bodies and organizations and to UNESCO headquarters and field staff.

8. For observance of the Day in 1994, UNESCO drew on the results of the World Conference on Special Needs in Education: Access and Quality (Salamanca, Spain, 7-10 June 1994) and proposed that forward-looking strategies to enhance the access to and quality of education for disabled persons be disseminated through public information materials.

2. Disabled People's International

9. The International Day was formally recognized by Disabled People's International, a non-governmental organization, in the pre-Assembly programme of the DPI World Assembly, on 3 December 1994, at Sydney (Australia).

3. World Veterans Federation

10. During its twenty-first General Assembly (Bordeaux, France, 2-6 December 1994), the World Veterans Federation (WVF), a non-governmental organization, held a special session on 3 December to celebrate the International Day. A representative of the United Nations delivered a message from the Secretary-General. The WVF Assembly adopted a resolution on the International Day which expressed the hope that the Day would not become a "once-a-year event", and requested its member organizations to provide a report on the situation of disabled persons. The WVF Assembly adopted a number of other resolutions related to disability which include issues related to anti-personnel mines, responses to unidentified diseases in war zones, assistance to new victims of war, design of inexpensive prosthetics and orthotics materials, and the implementation of recommendations adopted by the sixth International Conference on Legislation concerning War Veterans, War Disabled and Civilian Victims of War. The Assembly also adopted a Universal Declaration of Rights of War Veterans, War Disabled and Victims of War.

## B. Regional level

11. In connection with its observation of the International Day of Disabled Persons, the European Union highlighted the importance of autonomy, freedom of choice and independent living of disabled persons, through debate and subsequent declarations by disabled persons themselves. Representatives of 24 European and national disabled people's organizations, which are members of the European Disability Forum, met at the European Parliament at Brussels, from 17 to 18 October 1994, to debate four human rights issues: definition of disability; bio-ethics; eugenics and euthanasia; and independent living and sexuality.

12. The report of the Forum was launched throughout the European Union on 3 December 1994 during the European Disabled People's Parliament, held in the European Parliament Building in Brussels. An "Affirmation of Commitment" was signed by the president of the European Parliament, the chair of the Social Affairs Committee, the chair of the Sub-Committee on Human Rights, the Commissioner for Social Affairs, the chair of the Inter-Group on Disability, and co-chairs of the European Disabled People's Parliament.

13. The International Day presented an opportunity for disabled people to express their needs and interests directly to concerned public authorities, to inform politicians, policy makers and service providers of issues affecting their lives, and to express solidarity with disabled and non-disabled people throughout Europe. Participants of the Parliament emphasized that their human rights demanded not just one day a year but 365 days, if they were to become a daily reality, and that the European Day (of Disabled Persons) should be repeated every day and not be a once-a-year event.

14. The All Party Disablement Group of the European Parliament representing 100 members of Parliament from the different political groups and nationalities of the Parliament presented a statement of support from the Inter-Group. The Inter-Group requested that the Commission devote more resources for the Day and establish a specific line in the Commission budget for observation of the Day as well as for a study of anti-discrimination legislation. The Parliament adopted a resolution inviting the European Union to initiate legislation for the adoption and implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

15. Disability Awareness in Action (DAA) compiled a list of local and national events organized in conjunction with the International Day in the following countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom. Many of these countries also had representatives of non-governmental organizations at the First European Parliament of Disabled Persons.

## C. National and local level

16. Bahrain. A Committee consisting of representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations was formed to prepare for observation of the Day. The National Institute for Services to Disabled Persons played a leading role and implemented the following activities:

(a) Lectures and seminars in government and private schools by specialists on disability and disabled persons themselves;

(b) Publication of a special bulletin of the National Institute for Services to Disabled Persons;

(c) General knowledge contest on disability issues, attended by citizens and residents;

(d) Contest to prepare a message from non-disabled children under 15 to children with disabilities;

(e) Sporting contest and recreational events;

(f) Exhibitions of work by disabled persons;

(g) Field visits to families with disabled children as well as organization of joint excursions and entertainments;

(h) Benefit dinner in support of projects and programmes of benefit to disabled persons in the country.

17. Burkina Faso. A national observation of the situation of disabled persons has been organized since 1981. Burkina Faso organized its first National Week of Disabled Persons in conjunction with its observation of the International Year of Disabled Persons. The event was reorganized in 1986 as a more decentralized event, the Day of Disabled Persons, which is celebrated each year during the first two weeks of December in the provinces on a rotation basis. This serves to promote greater awareness among the population of the situation of their fellow disabled citizens. From 15 to 17 December, the Day was observed at Nouna in western Burkina Faso.

18. For 1994 Burkina Faso organized the International Day under the theme "Participation in the life of the community: employment and education of disabled persons". Preparation of the Day was placed under the patronage of the Prime Minister. The Burkinabé Federation of Associations for the Advancement of Disabled Persons played a major role in the organization of the Day. It used the occasion to inform the public of its objectives, and of the state of the implementation of the legislation in favour of disabled persons; to organize sports competitions, tricycle race, soccer matches for physically disabled, athletic activities for deaf, and a cycling race for blind and visually impaired persons; to organize cultural and economic activities. The Government also encouraged the formulation and implementation of a national disability programme.

19. Cameroon. The President of the Fédération nationale des associations de personnes handicapées du Cameroun issued a message to all members inviting them:

(a) To begin observing the National Day of Disabled Persons on 3 December, in accordance with the proclamation of the General Assembly, rather than its original date of 2 November;

(b) To use the Day to sensitize the public on the human rights of disabled persons;

(c) To organize national observation of the Day under the theme of "courage and brotherhood";

(d) To demonstrate the capabilities and capacities of persons with disabilities.

20. Congo. A national commission responsible for the organization of activities related to observation of the International Day was established by the Secretary of State for the Status of Disabled Persons. The Day was declared a national day of solidarity, action and sensitization of public opinion, one for raising awareness of the problems, needs and potentials of disabled persons with a view to proposing collective solutions.

21. The Programme of the Day included:

(a) Message on radio and television from the Secretary of State for the Status of Disabled Persons;

(b) Planting a symbolic tree on land reserved for the proposed vocational rehabilitation centre;

(c) Goal Ball competition for the blind, a marathon for the deaf and a tricycle race;

(d) Presentation of the Prime Minister's awards and decorations to 15 institutions and personalities working to promote the advancement of disabled persons;

(e) Laying the first stone of the National Orthopaedic Centre of Brazzaville, to be built with financial assistance of non-governmental organizations from the Netherlands (BLOS Foundation, through the Foundation on Equal Terms);

(f) Fund-raising activities (4-24 December) during which 1,375,255 CFA francs were raised as well as considerable in-kind contributions;

(g) Presentations by Congolese artists, which included a theatre recital by the deaf and poetry presentation by the blind.

22. Cyprus. The Government organized awareness-raising campaigns on the issue of disability, through posters and other printed materials, explaining the difficult relationship between a disabled individual and the environment.

23. Germany. The Federal Government of Germany celebrated the 1994 International Day of Disabled Persons at Bonn in the House of Disabled Persons (Gustav-Heinemann-Haus). The Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs invited representatives of disabled persons associations, rehabilitation funds, social partners and political groups to attend. The motto of the function was "Work for disabled persons". In his address, the Federal Minister welcomed the

decision of the United Nations to proclaim an International Day of Disabled Persons and said that he would seek to institutionalize it as an annual event in Germany. In the future, the Day would be a constant reminder to keep up efforts aimed at the rehabilitation and integration of disabled persons. The Federal Minister gave an overview of the current situation of disabled persons in the general labour market and noted that in Germany a high level of integration of disabled persons was achieved as a result of joint efforts on the part of all parties concerned.

24. Representatives of disabled persons associations took the floor as did representatives from the grass roots who described their personal experiences related to integration of disabled persons into the general labour market.

25. Information was provided on the latest developments in the comprehensive data bank, REHADAT, set up by the Institut der Deutschen Wirtschaft (German Business Institute) at Cologne. REHADAT includes data on vocational rehabilitation and integration of disabled persons into working life in Germany.

26. The event included a field visit to a workshop of the Gustav-Heinemann House which provides pre-training for young disabled persons.

27. By way of background, in 1981 the Federal Government established a post of ombudsman for disabled persons, in connection with the observation of the International Year. The ombudsman promotes public awareness of the International Day through a variety of local events and the media.

28. Guinea. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Employment, in collaboration with the Guinean Federation for the Advancement of Organizations of Disabled Persons, a grouping of 10 separate associations of persons with disabilities, organized a Week of Solidarity for Disabled Persons. During the week, two days (1 and 2 December 1994) were devoted to discussion and study of the theme "Problematic of social integration of disabled persons", with the following sub-themes:

- (a) Situation of disabled persons in Guinea;
- (b) Social and vocational rehabilitation and promotion of employment;
- (c) Strategic measures and recommendations for action.

29. Disabled persons and representatives of ministerial departments and international and regional organizations participated in the two days of discussion and study. Recommendations identified include:

- (a) Need to establish a State organism to deal with problems of disabled persons;
- (b) Need for greater material and financial support to organizations of disabled persons, including provision of subsidies;
- (c) Need for improved coordination and greater partnership among concerned ministerial departments and civil society;

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(d) Need to strengthen the support provided to specialized schools for the deaf and blind through subsidies and the provision of a special allowance to teachers working with disabled children;

(e) Need to set up a Braille printing press at the capital, Conakry;

(f) Importance of promoting integrated schools in the provinces;

(g) Need for further development and strengthening of national disability capacities through training programmes in Guinea and abroad;

(h) Importance of greater sensitization of families on the importance of not discriminating against children with disabilities, who have a right to education;

(i) Need to set up an interministerial commission responsible for formulating legislation to protect disabled persons.

30. Kenya. The International Day was celebrated at Mombasa, where the Executive Board of the Union of Disabled Persons of Kenya joined in its observation with disabled persons themselves. The Union focused on the issue of legislation, which could serve to revitalize disability programmes throughout the country. It strongly recommended nomination of a disabled person to the National Assembly, to represent the needs of persons with disabilities.

31. Mauritius. The Government undertook the following measures to observe the Day:

(a) Sensitization campaigns through posters, television, radio programmes and press releases;

(b) Publication of leaflets and magazines;

(c) Holding skill competitions to highlight the abilities and potentials of disabled persons;

(d) Organization of workshops and seminars for the benefit of non-governmental organizations and community leaders;

(e) Organization of programmes by disabled artists;

(f) Presentation of the Prime Minister's Award to the best employer of disabled persons and to the best disabled employees; and

(g) Setting up of a high-level steering committee to study all aspects of accessibility for disabled persons and to come up with appropriate recommendations.

32. Morocco. The International Day was organized by the High Commission for Disabled Persons, created in March 1994. The following activities were undertaken:

(a) Organization of an International Colloquium on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1-3 December 1994), which included a performance by a disabled pianist and inauguration of an exhibit of painters with disabilities;

(b) Organization of a gala dinner by the High Commission and the Cultural Association of the Greater Atlas (Tangier) section, which included performances by disabled artists from Morocco and abroad and whose proceeds will support programmes of benefit to disabled persons;

(c) A tour of Morocco with a Moroccan humorist (18 November-25 December 1994), organized by the High Commission; tour proceeds will support institutions and programmes for disabled persons.

33. Netherlands. On the occasion of the International Day, the Chairman of the Council for Disabled Persons presented a report to the Secretary of the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Culture, which is charged with coordination of policies pertaining to disabled persons. The report expands on the role of non-governmental organizations in the Law on Provisions for Disabled Persons which entered into effect on 1 April 1994.

34. Norway. The International Day of Disabled Persons was observed by holding a train conference, Oslo/Lillehammer/Oslo, on 3 December 1993, organized by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. Participants included the Minister of Social Affairs, Minister of Children and Family Affairs, and State Secretary, Ministry of Transportation and Communications, and representatives from the State Council for the Disabled, various organizations for disabled persons, the Norwegian State Railways, the Lillehammer Paralympic Organizing Committee, the exhibition Parafair '94, the project "Lillehammer - a Town for All", and representatives of the media. The main purpose of the conference was to highlight the Government's 1994-1997 plan of action for disabled persons, approved by the Storting (Parliament) in connection with the 1994 fiscal budget. The primary focus was on measures to promote a community in which disabled persons could participate fully, including measures to be taken in order to improve the accessibility of services. Information was provided by the Norwegian State Railways, the Lillehammer Paralympic Organizing Committee and other planning groups on the measures to be implemented in connection with the XVII Winter Olympic Games and the VI Paralympic Winter Games, which took place in February and March 1994, respectively.

35. Since Lillehammer is one of the municipalities of Norway which has taken a lead in developing improved services for disabled persons, the Minister of Social Affairs used the occasion of the International Day to present the Mayor of Lillehammer with a letter acknowledging efforts made in the area.

36. Observance of the International Day received extensive media coverage, in which it was particularly emphasized that Norway had a long way to go before it could claim that its communities were adequately adapted for the disabled. For instance, it was noted that the Norwegian State Railways were not suitably equipped for wheelchair users. Consequently the December conference was followed up by a second train conference on 2 March 1994, to consider problems disclosed during the previous conference.

37. Pakistan. The Government proclaimed 3 December as the International Day, and disabled people at the grass-roots level organized celebrations which included theatre pieces, dances and exhibitions. Sensitization campaigns were organized through posters and mobiles sent by Disability Awareness in Action, a non-governmental organization.

38. South Africa. In 1993, the (then) Department of National Health and Population Development established a national coordinating committee consisting of concerned governmental departments such as health, welfare, manpower and police, and national councils concerned with the welfare of people with disabilities, including the blind, deaf, physically disabled and persons with epilepsy and cancer. Organizations for people with disabilities such as Disabled People South Africa and Curamus were also part of the committee. The committee had the following responsibilities: to coordinate, facilitate and monitor inputs at the national level; to coordinate with the media at the national level; and to establish and serve as a link between the United Nations and provincial structures.

39. The Committee held four meetings during 1993 to prepare for the Day. It unanimously decided that the theme for the Day should be "A right to equal opportunities for people with disabilities", with the slogan "We have the will, give us the way". The slogan was printed on posters which depicted children with various types of disabilities. They were distributed to organizations and institutions nation-wide.

40. The Department of Manpower successfully coordinated and facilitated the activities at the regional and local levels. In 1993, 73 organizations took part in related activities, and 48 programmes were organized. The media were involved in 61 reports with regard to the 48 programmes. More than 5,300 persons with disabilities participated in the event, as did nearly 2,000 able persons.

41. A wide variety of activities was undertaken at the grass-roots level by various groups and organizations. They included educational, cultural, social and sports events, information and service demonstrations, concerts by persons with disabilities, dinner dances, flea markets and competitions. Posters and related material on persons with disabilities were displayed in the foyers of the Department of National Health and Population Development in order to make civil servants aware of the skills and abilities of persons with disabilities.

42. Observation of the International Day had many positive effects. The following comments were received from various organizations and regions:

(a) There was excellent cooperation and enthusiasm among State departments, members of concerned organizations, town councils, the public, and the private sector;

(b) The event strengthened the bond between people with disabilities, and it was an opportunity for them to raise their voices so that others could become aware of their needs and problems;

(c) In conjunction with the Day, State departments and organizations were able to introduce their services to persons with disabilities;

(d) Most activities organized were based on local needs and resources.

43. Saint Lucia. The National Council of the Disabled in Saint Lucia observed the Day with a demonstration and rally, which included a march through the streets of Castries, the capital, with approximately 300 disabled persons, relatives and friends bearing placards. The march culminated in Derick Walcott Square where the gathering was addressed by the President of the National Council of the Disabled, the Minister of Social Affairs on behalf of the Prime Minister and two disabled persons.

44. Switzerland. The President of the Confederation for 1994 issued a message on the occasion of the Day which was observed under the theme "Etre de la partie. Prendre les choses en main" (To belong. To take things in hand). The Confederation des organisations faitières privées d'aide aux handicapés (Confederation of private organizations for assistance to disabled persons) which consists of 20 associations, invited its members to organize regional and local events in relation to the Day. It provided its members with guidelines containing suggestions on cost-effective activities that might be undertaken. For instance, in Lausanne a catalogue containing a list of all accessible buildings in the canton of Vaud was published. In Basel the focus was on accessibility of public transport. In St. Gall a conference was organized by the media on the theme of the formulation of a model cantonal policy in favour of disabled persons. More than 200 newspapers disseminated the message of the President of the Confederation, and interviews with disabled persons were organized. After a critical evaluation of the observance of the Day, the Confederation is now planning for the 1995 celebration, which will include the involvement of churches, since 3 December 1995 falls on a Sunday, and participation of cantonal conferences of disabled persons.

45. Syrian Arab Republic. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour organized meetings and activities for the occasion of the International Day of Disabled Persons. The participants were people with different disabilities plus officials from relevant ministries, organizations and agencies. Activities were also organized by Social and Labour Departments in other provinces.

46. Turkey. Observation of the International Day provided an opportunity to discuss implementation of the National Action Plan on Disability. The subject was given extensive coverage by the Turkish Radio and Television Company. Panel discussions and forums were also held on private and local television and radio stations and at universities.

47. The Confederation of Organizations of Disabled Persons, consisting of organizations of the blind, the deaf, persons with intellectual disabilities, and the physically disabled, held festivals in Ankara and Istanbul during the period 25-30 November 1994. A meeting was held on 1 and 2 December with the participation of approximately 300 disabled people from all areas of Turkey. On 3 December, the recommendations of the meeting were submitted to the President of the Grand National Assembly, the Prime Minister, and representatives of political parties.

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48. It was decided that the National Coordinating Council for the Protection of Disabled Persons would meet with the Minister of Labour and Social Security to discuss the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and to review and evaluate activities undertaken within the framework of the National Action Plan.

49. United Republic of Tanzania. During the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, the Government decreed that each 10th of August would be the National Day of Disabled Persons. Thus, the Government decided to observe both the International and the National Days (3 December and 10 August, respectively). Activities carried out focused on sensitization of the community, promotion of the participation by people with disabilities, and fundraising.

50. Uganda. Celebration of the International Day in the Eastern part of Uganda was organized by Tukolereghalala Disabled Unit of Iganga, one of the affiliates of the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda. Activities included tricycle races, a procession through the streets of Iganga Town, public speeches, songs and drama presentations. After the procession and the sports competitions, over 5,000 people assembled at Iganga Town Council to listen to the Day's messages.

51. The achievements identified for the Day included:

(a) Raised awareness of the Day within the district and sensitization of the public to the needs of persons with disabilities;

(b) The Iganga District Administration promised to allocate land to the Association on which they intended to construct disability service structures, workshop and offices;

(c) The Union decided that 3 December would be celebrated regionally, on a rotational basis: in 1993, it was observed in the central region; in 1994, in the eastern region. In 1995 it would be held in the northern region and in 1996, in the western region. It was envisaged that the Union would in each case provide some co-financing and logistical support in cooperation with the concerned regional-level organizations.

52. United States of America. The "People-To-People" Committee on Disability, a non-profit organization, wrote to governors of all 50 states of the United States urging them to recognize the Day and issue a proclamation. Twelve proclamations were issued and included in an exhibit organized at a meeting (2 December, Washington, D.C.) of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. The proclamations were subsequently forwarded to the United Nations.

## II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Conclusions

53. Information received suggests that both Governments and organizations of disabled persons have benefited from the opportunity to mark the International Day and promote the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. The expanded role being played by non-governmental organizations is of note, particularly that of organizations of disabled persons, in furthering the objectives of the World Programme of Action and wide dissemination of the Standard Rules.

54. The particular contribution of Disability Awareness in Action, which prepared and forwarded information and promotional materials for celebration of the International Day to many organizations in different regions of the world, is noted with appreciation. Their material was characterized by general guidelines and practical suggestions which were easily adapted to the different circumstances of each country.

55. Many important initiatives were undertaken during the first two years of observation of the International Day. Measures that Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, as appropriate, may wish to include in subsequent preparations for the Day include:

(a) Proclamations issued by national (and subnational) Governments on the rights of disabled persons;

(b) Discussion forums on disability, involving organizations of disabled persons, members of local, national or regional parliaments, and administrative authorities, to discuss issues relevant to people with disabilities in the country or the region concerned;

(c) Special recognition to persons and organizations that work for the advancement of disabled persons, through the presentation of awards to the "best employer", the "best employee with disabilities" or the "most innovative and successful programmes of benefit to persons with disabilities";

(d) A "week of solidarity with disabled persons", which could combine discussions, technical exchanges, strategic planning and fundraising to further work on disability-related issues;

(e) Sports and cultural events to provide an opportunity for disabled persons to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and potential in various competitions.

### B. Recommendations

56. Governments that have not already done so may wish to consider using the occasion of the Day, in cooperation with the non-governmental community and the private sector, as appropriate, to:

/...

- (a) Initiate a dialogue on the needs, interests and aspirations of the disabled community;
- (b) Take stock of progress made and of obstacles encountered throughout the Year in the implementation of disability policies and programmes;
- (c) Promote increased solidarity between peoples with disabilities and society as a whole. This could include national fundraising activities in the disability field;
- (d) Decentralize the preparation and observation of the Day among different regions and areas so as to avoid concentration of activities in one venue;
- (e) Explore options to encourage concerned international and regional organizations and potential donors to contribute to improvements in the situation of disabled persons through better articulation of their needs and concerns, identification of practical solutions, and assistance with practical implementation;
- (f) Seek more active involvement of schools, universities and other academic institutions and civil society, particularly that of non-disabled citizens, in observation of the Day.

57. The critical role of the mass media in successful preparation and celebration of the International Day should be accorded special attention by all parties concerned.

58. Follow-up to observation of the International Day should include monitoring the implementation of recommendations agreed upon by the disabled community, the authorities concerned and civil society.

#### Notes

- 1/ A/37/351/Add.1 and Corr.1, annex, sect. VII, recommendation 1 (IV).
- 2/ General Assembly resolution 48/96, annex.

Annex

MESSAGE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE  
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS

3 December 1994

We are moving from a world fragmented by differences to one in which human diversity is recognized as a boundless source of creativity. Never has it been more clear that a society which accommodates human diversity not only respects fundamental freedoms, it also mobilizes the full potential of all its members.

On this International Day of Disabled Persons, we focus on the freedom and potential of persons with disabilities. Since the 1970s, the United Nations has been working to bring this focus to the international community. The United Nations proclaimed 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons and in 1982 adopted the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. From 1983 to 1992 it observed the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. In 1993, it adopted the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Disabled Persons. And this year, the United Nations reviewed a long-term strategy for the implementation of the World Programme of Action.

These efforts have brought tangible results for persons with disabilities. But more is required. Adequate resources and firm political resolve are needed to transform into reality the commitments made in the World Programme of Action. The Standard Rules must be understood and actively applied in every society. Through upcoming global conferences and in other ways, the international community must continue to integrate disability concerns into the wider effort to construct a new development vision and a new framework for development cooperation.

Persons with disabilities challenge the world community to grow - to build emotional, intellectual and practical bases for a society which advances the freedoms, addresses the needs and facilitates the contributions of all peoples.

On this International Day of Disabled Persons, let us accept their challenge with enthusiasm. Let us be inspired by their courage. Let us strengthen our commitment to building a society for all.

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